

Div Buegeleisen
Testimony in Support of House Bill 4625 – 4628
June 22, 2011

My name is Div Buegeleisen and I am a resident of West Bloomfield Township, Michigan. I am a graduate of The University of Michigan with a BA in Psychology, a teacher's certificate from Wayne State University, a Master's Degree in Language Arts Educations from Oakland University, and a Master's degree in Guidance and Counseling also from Oakland University. I had twenty years experience teaching in the Detroit Public School System. As a member of Students First, a new national movement to transform public education, I am here in support of House Bill 4625, House Bill 4626, House Bill 4627, and House Bill 4628.

One of the reasons I support this legislation is because it ends seniority-based layoffs. We must make sure that all of our students have quality teachers at the head of their classrooms. By requiring districts to hold teachers accountable, we ensure that our students are being taught by effective teachers.

I have been following the decline of the Detroit Public School System for approximately 60 years. We cannot wait any longer to provide our children with an adequate education. There are not many broom-pushing jobs anymore, or jobs where people push a button or turn a screw. Robots do that now. Factories need people to fix the robots. This requires an excellent education in math and science and an excellent teacher to do the job.

Everyone has read many reports about the low scores and the alarming number of children who don't graduate high school. As a result of their school experiences, many, if not most develop a negative attitude toward learning. They think that it is irrelevant and unnecessary.

In the twenty years that I taught in Detroit, I never heard a teacher question his or her teaching method. There was only constant complaining about the children, the parents and the community as reasons why the children didn't do better.

I tried to share the techniques that I learned while taking a master's degree at Oakland University. But the teachers were convinced that the children couldn't do those things. So I went in my room and was constantly amazed

at the wonderful work that my students produced.

It is easy to find excuses why something won't work. But when you see some people making things work, why not learn from them? Of course it is more difficult to teach in a neighborhood where there are many problems. Does that mean that we shouldn't try? Absolutely not. I am here today because I believe that great teachers make a difference for children of all backgrounds and all children deserve great teachers.

I hope that you understand how important it is to change the system and get rid of last in, first out policies and seniority based layoffs. The policies are harmful to students' growth and their willingness to learn. Our children deserve to be given the opportunity of a good education. Without it they have little or no chance for a decent life. Our country needs an educated population if we are to continue to be a strong and a positive influence in the world. I have seen first hand that even the most challenging students want to learn. That is why I urge you to support House Bill 4625, House Bill 4626, House Bill 4627, and House Bill 4628.

Thank you for your time.